

NOTES of the **CUSTOMER SERVICES KEY AREA GROUP MEETING** held online on **Thursday 6 January 2021** at 19.00 hours.

Present: Robert Duggan Chairman
Joseph Foster Vice Chairman
Lee Gibbs*
Kathleen Willis
Graham Allen
Emma Coe-Gunnell White*

Robert Eggleston
Matthew Cornish
Tofojjul Hussein
Peter Chapman
Ann Eves
Sylvia Neumann
Janice Henwood

Also present: Steve Cridland, Chief Executive Officer
Steve Hill, Jessica Macey, Graham Roberts WSCC

** Denotes non-attendance*

(19:00 hours)

85. **OPEN FORUM**
No members of the public attended.
86. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Cllr Gibbs
87. **SUBSTITUTES**
Nil
88. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
Nil
89. **NOTES OF MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services Key Area Group held on 5 November 2020, having been previously circulated, were **AGREED** and will be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

90. **COMMUNITY ROAD VERGE PROGRAMME**

WSCC has launched a programme to rewild verges under their jurisdiction. The project will encourage the sowing of wild flower seeds which will be beneficial to insects (pollinators) and also save maintenance costs. Three officers from WSCC attended the meeting. Steve Hill suggested that initially small spaces be identified and sowed as a trial. 4m X 4m was suggested. The residents in the area should be informed about the project and that it will mean that these areas will no longer be manicured.

Two methods were suggested. The first was to sow seeds over existing grass areas while the second was to peel back the grass and sow seeds. Wild flowers like soil which is low in nutrients. Some seeds could successfully control grass. Corn flowers or perennials were suggested.. native flowers mixed with some perennials were suggested. Sow in autumn and spring. Plug plants were also suggested.

It was important that the public be informed of the project. A potential problem would be litter trapped and dog droppings which would be more difficult to pick up.

Steve Hill was keen to see Burgess Hill being a leader for this project and promised whatever support they had. They do have communication material. Community involvement is key and individual spaces may be more successful than verges. Spaces around the town entrance signs were encouraged. Cllr Henwood had previously had success with plug plants rather than seeds and although more expensive were better.

WSCC is developing suitable signage to inform the public of project areas and will ensure that their contractors are informed and do not mow these areas. They realise that to be successful, grass cuttings should be removed. They do not currently have the equipment to do this and that is why it is important to find community groups willing to pioneer the project. It was suggested that the project be introduced slowly over a few years. The Town Council has limited resources but could take on some areas. It was felt that areas within parks should be discouraged as this removed recreation areas.

Clarity was sought from WSCC officials on whether a planting licence was needed as well as any other information such as sight lines for roads. The possibility of a memorandum of understanding was raised. Should the project result in savings as a result of less maintenance this would be shared with the Town Council

The Chairman thanked Steve Hill, Jessica Macey and Graham Roberts from WSCC for attending the meeting and their support in what the group sees as a worthwhile project.

RESOLVED

That a small subcommittee be formed to identify spaces to plant, community groups and budgets, and to work with the CEO and Maintenance Section Head to launch the rewilding of verges project.

91. **FURTHER UPDATES**

PETANQUE: Planning permission is expected by the end of January. MSDC has been asked whether the project can go ahead once permission is granted and a response is awaited.

BATCHELORS FARM NATURE RESERVE: The first issue of the Friends of Batchelors Farm newsletter was produced in November. At least 35 people have expressed an interest in joining and have been sent a copy. We regret that no definitive response has been received from Mid Sussex District Council to our request that Batchelors Farm be declared a local nature reserve.

VIRGIN BOXES: No further response had been received despite follow up emails.

92. **AIR POLLUTION MONITORING**

The chairman introduced a late item based on an email received from MSDC:

“Back in July, you asked whether we would consider installing an additional air quality monitoring location in Burgess Hill at Hoadley’s Corner. As you are aware, we review all the air quality monitoring sites within the Mid Sussex area every year. This review took place in December 2020 as planned. Following your suggestion, we consider that an additional monitor at this location will provide valuable data on nitrogen dioxide exposure given the traffic levels there and the proximity of the residential properties to the road. We will be arranging installation of the tube later this month.

The air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide that we will be assessing the results against is an annual average. So we will not have any meaningful data until spring 2022. The results will be reported in the Annual Status Report for the year 2021 which is submitted to DEFRA in June 2022.”

NOTED

Meeting ended 19.40

